

AS TO THE  
LEOPARD'S SPOTS

*An Open Letter to Thomas Dixon, Jr.*

BY

KELLY MILLER

*Howard University, Washington, D. C.*

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SEPTEMBER, 1905.

MR. THOMAS DIXON, JR.,

DEAR SIR:—

I am writing you this letter to express the attitude and feeling of ten million of your fellow citizens toward the evil propagandism of race animosity to which you have lent your great literary powers. Through the wide-spread influence of your writings you have become the chief priest of those who worship at the shrine of race hatred and wrath. This one spirit runs through all your books and published utterances, like the recurrent theme of an opera. As the general trend of your doctrine is clearly epitomized and put forth in your contribution to the *Saturday Evening Post* of August 19, I beg to consider chiefly the issues therein raised. You are a white man born in the midst of the civil war, I am a Negro born during the same stirring epoch. You were born with a silver spoon in your mouth, I was born with an iron hoe in my hand. Your race has inflicted accumulated injury and wrong upon mine, mine has borne yours only service and good will. You express your views with the most scathing frankness, I am sure, you will welcome an equally candid expression from me.

Permit me to acknowledge the personal consideration which you have shown me. You will doubtless recall that when I addressed The Congregational Ministers, of New York City, some year or more ago, you asked permission to be present and listened attentively to what I had to say, although as might have been expected, you beat a precipitous retreat when luncheon was announced. In your article in the *Post* you make several references to me and to other colored men with entire personal courtesy. So far as I know you have never varied from this rule in

your personal dealings with members of my race. You are merciless, however, in excoriating the race as a whole, thus keenly wounding the sensibilities of every individual of that blood. I assure you that this courtesy of personal treatment will be reciprocated in this letter, however sharply I may be compelled to take issue with the views you set forth and to deplore your attitude. I shall endeavor to indulge in no bitter word against your race nor against the South, whose exponent and special pleader you assume to be.

I fear that you have mistaken personal manners, the inevitable varnish of any gentleman of your antecedents and rearing, for friendship to a race which you hold in despite. You tell us that you are kind and considerate to your personal servants. It is somewhat strange that you should deem such assurance necessary, any more than it is necessary for you to assure us that you are kind to and fond of your horse or your dog. But when you write yourself down as "one of their best friends," you need not be surprised if we retort the refrain of the ritual: "From all such profusers of friendship, good Lord deliver us." An astronomer once tried to convince a layman, unlearned in astronomical lore, that the North Star was bigger than the moon. The unsophisticated reply was: "It might be so, but it has a mighty poor way of showing it." The reconciliation of your apparently violent attitude with your profession of friendship is, I confess, too subtle a process for the African intellect.

I beg to call your attention to a fault of temper which may be unconscious on your part. The traditional method of your class in dealing with adverse opinion was "a word and a blow," with you it is a word and an epithet. Your opponents of opinion are set down as "pot-house politicians," "the ostrich man," "the pooh-pooh man," and "the benevolent old maid." Of course, Theodore Roosevelt, Andrew Carnegie, J. L. M. Curry, Lyman Abbott, Chancellor Hill, John D. Rockefeller and E. Gardner Murphy, would fall under the one or the other of your sonorous designations. Your choicest assortment of epithets, I presume, is reserved for Robert C. Ogden and the General Education Board whom you seem to regard with especial repugnance. It was for these you doubtless intended such appellatives as "weak-minded optimists," and "female men." The most illustrious names in America, living and dead, would fall under the ban of your opprobrium. According to your standard, the only Americans who could be accounted safe, sane and judicious on the race issue would be, the author of the Leopard's Spots, Senator Tillman, and Governor Vardaman!

Your fundamental thesis is that "no amount of education of

any kind, industrious, classical or religious, can make a Negro a white man or bridge the chasm of the centuries which separates him from the white man in the evolution of human history." This doctrine is as old as human oppression. Calhoun made it the arch stone in the defense of Negro slavery—and lost.

This is but a recrudescence of the doctrine which was exploited and exploded during the anti-slavery struggle. Do you recall the school of pro-slavery scientists who demonstrated beyond doubt that the Negro's skull was too thick to comprehend the substance of Aryan knowledge? Have you not read in the discredited scientific books of that period, with what triumphant acclaim it was shown that the Negro's shape and size of skull, facial angle, and cephalic configuration rendered him forever impervious to the white man's civilization? But all enlightened minds are now as ashamed of that doctrine as they are of the one time dogma that the Negro had no soul. We become aware of mind through its manifestations. Within forty years of only partial opportunity, while playing as it were in the back yard of civilization, the American Negro has cut down his illiteracy by over fifty percent; has produced a professional class, some fifty thousand strong, including ministers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, editors, authors, architects, engineers, and all higher lines of listed pursuits in which white men are engaged; some three thousand Negroes have taken collegiate degrees, over three hundred being from the best institutions in the North and West established for the most favored white youth; there is scarcely a first-class institution in America, excepting some three or four in the South, that is without colored students who pursue their studies generally with success, and sometimes with distinction; Negro inventors have taken out four hundred patents as a contribution to the mechanical genius of America; there are scores of Negroes who, for conceded ability and achievements, take respectable rank in the company of distinguished Americans.

It devolves upon you, Mr. Dixon, to point out some standard, either of intelligence, character or conduct to which the Negro can not conform. Will you please tell a waiting world just what is the psychological difference between the races? No reputable authority, either of the old or the new school of psychology, has yet pointed out any sharp psychic discriminant. There is not a single intellectual, moral or spiritual excellence attained by the white race to which the Negro does not yield an appreciative response. If you could show that the Negro was incapable of mastering the intricacies of Aryan speech, that he could not comprehend the intellectual basis of European culture, or apply the apparatus of practical knowledge, that he could not be made amenable to the white man's ethical code or appreciate his

spiritual motive, then your case would be proved. But in default of such demonstration, we must relegate your eloquent pronouncement to the realm of generalization and prophecy, an easy and agreeable exercise of the mind in which the romancer is ever prone to indulge.

The inherent, essential and unchangeable inferiority of the Negro to the white man lies at the basis of your social philosophy. You disdain to examine the validity of your fondly cherished hope. You follow closely in the wake of Tom Watson, in the June number of his homonymous magazine. You both hurl your thesis of innate racial inferiority at the head of Booker T. Washington. You use the same illustrations, the same arguments, set forth in the same order of recital, and for the most part in identical language. This seems to be an instance of great minds, or at least of minds of the same grade, running in the same channel.

These are your words: "What contribution to human progress have the millions of Africa, who inhabit this planet made during the past four thousand years? Absolutely nothing." These are the words of Thomas Watson spoken some two months previous: "What does civilization owe to the Negro race? Nothing! Nothing!! Nothing!!!" You answer the query with the most emphatic negative noun and the strongest qualifying adjective in the language. Mr. Watson, of a more ecstatic temperament, replies with the same noun and six exclamation points. One rarely meets, outside of yellow journalism, with such lavishness of language, wasted upon a hoary dogma. A discredited dictum that has been bandied about the world from the time of Canaan to Calhoun, is revamped and set forth with as much ardor and fervency of feeling as if discovered for the first time and proclaimed for the illumination of a waiting world.

But neither boastful asseveration on your part nor indignant denial on mine will affect the facts of the case. That Negroes in the average are not equal in developed capacity to the white race, is a proposition which it would be as simple to affirm as it is silly to deny. The Negro represents a backward race which has not yet taken a commanding part in the progressive movement of the world. In the great cosmic scheme of things, some races reach the lime light of civilization ahead of others. But that temporary forwardness does not argue inherent superiority is as evident as any fact of history. An unfriendly environment may hinder and impede the one, while fortunate circumstances may quicken and spur the other. Relative superiority is only a transient phase of human development. You tell us that "The Jew had achieved a civilization—had his poets, prophets, priests and kings, when our Germanic ancestors were still in the woods cracking cocoanuts



and hickorynuts with the monkeys." Fancy some learned Jew at that day citing your query about the contribution of the Germanic races to the culture of the human spirit, during the thousands of years of their existence! Does the progress of history not prove that races may lie dormant and fallow for ages and then break suddenly into prestige and power? Fifty years ago you doubtless would have ranked Japan among the benighted nations and hurled at their heathen heads some derogatory query as to their contribution to civilization. But since the happenings at Mukden and Port Arthur, and Portsmouth, I suppose that you are ready to change your mind. Or may be since the Jap has proved himself "a first class fighting man," able to cope on equal terms with the best breeds of Europe, you will claim him as belonging to the white race, notwithstanding his pig eye and yellow pigment.

In the course of history the ascendancy of the various races and nations of men is subject to strange variability. The Egyptian, the Jew, the Indian, the Greek, the Roman, the Arab, has each had his turn at domination. When the earlier nations were in their zenith of art and thought and song, Franks and Britons, and Germans were roaming through dense forests, groveling in subterranean caves, practicing barbarous rites, and chanting horrid incantations to graven gods. In the proud days of Aristotle, the ancestors of Newton and Shakespeare and Bacon could not count beyond the ten fingers. As compared with the developed civilization of the period, they were a backward, though as subsequent development has shown, by no means an inferior race. There were hasty philosophers in that day who branded these people with the everlasting stamp of inferiority. The brand of philosophy portrayed in *Tom Watson's Magazine* has flourished in all ages of the world.

The individuals of a backward race are not, as such, necessarily inferior to those of a more advanced people. The vast majority of any race is composed of ordinary and inferior folk. To use President Roosevelt's expression, they can not pull their own weight. It is only the few choice individuals, reinforced by a high standard of social efficiency, that are capable of adding to the civilization of the world.

There is no hard and fast line dividing the two races on the scale of capacity. There is the widest possible range of variation within the limits of each. A philosopher and a fool may not only be members of the same race but of the same family. No scheme of classification is possible which will include all white men and shut out all Negroes. According to any test of excellence that your and Mr. Watson's ingenuity can devise, some Negroes will

be superior to most white men; no stretch of ingenuity or strain of conscience has yet devised a plan of franchise which includes all of the members of one race and excludes all those of the other.

Learned opinion on the other side ought, at least, to weigh as much against your thesis as your own fulminations count in favor of it. You surely have high respect for the authority of Thomas Jefferson.—In a letter to Benjamin Banneker, the Negro astronomer, the author of the great declaration wrote: “Nobody wishes more than I do to see such proofs as you exhibit that nature has given to our black brethren talents equal to those of the other colors of men, and that the apparent want of them is owing merely to the degraded condition of their existence, both in Africa and America.”

Mr. William Mathews, a noted author, writing some time ago in the *North American Review*, asserts: “We affirm that the inferiority of the Negro has never been proven, nor is there any good ground to suppose that he is forever to maintain his relative position, or that he is inferior to the white man in any other sense than some white races are inferior to each other.”

Prof. N. F. Shaler, a native of the South, and Professor in Harvard University, writes in the *Arena*: “There are hundreds and thousands of black men who in capacity, are to be ranked with the superior persons of the dominant race, and it is hard to say that in any evident feature of mind they characteristically differ from their white fellow citizens.”

Benjamin Kidd, in his work on *Social Evolution* declares that the Negro child shows no inferiority, and that the deficiency which he seems to manifest in after life is due to his dwarfing and benumbing environment. Prof. John Spencer Bassett, of Trinity College, North Carolina, has had the courage to state the belief that the Negro would gain equality some day. He also tells us that Dr. Booker Washington, whom Mr. Watson takes so sharply to task for hinting that the Negro may be superior to some white men, is the greatest man with a single exception, that the South has produced in a hundred years. This is indeed a suggestion of Negro superiority, with a vengeance. In the judgment of this distinguished Southerner, one Negro, at least, is superior to millions of his white fellow citizens, including the editor of *Tom Watson's Magazine* and the author of *The Leopard's Spots*.

But, rejoins the objector: “if the Negro possesses this inherent capacity, why has he not given the world the benefit of it during the course of history?” Capacity is potential rather than a dynamic mode of energy. Whatever native capacity the mind may possess, it must be stimulated and reinforced by social accomplishments before it can show great achievements. In arith-

metic a number has an inherent and local value, the latter being by far the more powerful function in numerical calculation. The individual may count for much, but the social efficiency counts for most. It is absolutely impossible for a Bacon to thrive among the Bushmen or a Herbert Spencer among the Hottentots. The great names of the world always arise among the people who, for the time being are in the forefront of the world's movements. We do not expect names of the first degree of lustre to arise among suppressed and submerged classes.

In confirmation of this view let us turn for a moment to the pages of history. Mr. Lecky tells us in his "History of European Morals":

"I regard it as one of the anomalies of history that within the narrow limits and scanty population of the Greek states should have arisen men who in almost every conceivable form of genius, in philosophy, in ethics, in dramatic and lyric poetry, in written and spoken eloquence, in statesmanship, in sculpture, in painting, and probably also in music, should have attained almost or altogether the highest limits of human perfection."

Mr. Galton in his "Hereditary Genius" tells us: "We have no men to put beside Socrates and Phidias. The millions of Europe breeding as they have done for the subsequent two thousand years have never produced their equals. It follows from all this that the average ability of the Athenian race is, on the lowest estimate, very nearly two grades higher than our own, that is about as much as our race is above that of the African Negro." And yet this intellectual race, this race of Phidias and Homer, of Plato and Socrates, has continued for two thousand years in a state of complete intellectual stagnation. When they lost their political nationality and become submerged beneath the heavy weight of oppression, to use the language of Macaulay, "their people have degenerated into timid slaves and their language into a barbarous jargon." Can there be any stronger proof of the fact that great achievements depend upon environment and social stimulus rather than innate capacity?

Where now is the boasted glory of Egypt and Babylon, of Nineveh and Tyre? Expeditions from distant continents are sent to unearth the achievements of renowned ancestors beneath the very feet of their degenerate descendants, as a mute reminder to the world of the transiency of human greatness.

The Jews seem to form an exception to this rule, but the exception is seeming rather than real. While they have lost their political integrity, they have preserved their spiritual nationality. The race of Mosés and Paul and Jesus still produces great names though not of the same grade of glory as their prototypes of old.

Our own country has not escaped the odium of intellectual inferiority. The generation has scarcely passed away in whose ears used to ring the standing sneer "Who reads an American Book?" It was in the day of Thomas Jefferson that a learned European declared: "America has not produced one good poet, one able mathematician, one man of genius in a single art or science." In response to this charge, Jefferson enters an eloquent special plea. He says: "When we shall have existed as a people as long as the Greeks did before they produced a Homer, the Romans a Virgil, the French a Racine, the English a Shakespeare and Milton, should this reproach be still true, we will inquire from what unfriendly cause it has proceeded." How analogous to this is the reproach which you and Mr. Watson, treading the track of Thomas Nelson Page, and those of his school of thought, now hurl against the Negro race? The response of Jefferson defending the American colonies from the reproach of innate inferiority will apply with augmented emphasis to ward off similar charges against the despised and rejected Negro. A learned authority tells us that—"Hardly two centuries have passed since Russia was covered with a horde of barbarians among whom it would have been as difficult to find any example of intellectual cultivation and refinement as at this day to find the same phenomenon at Timbuctoo or among the Negroes of Georgia or Alabama." It is well for the good fame of the Russian people that *Tom Watson's Magazine* did not exist in those days.

According to a study of the distribution of ability in the United States, by Hon. Henry Cabot Lodge, the little State of Massachusetts has produced more men of distinction and achievement than all the South combined. "In architecture, agriculture, manufactures, finance, legislation, sculpture, religion, organization, painting, music, literature, science, the wedding of the fine arts to religion," the South is relatively backward as compared with other sections of the country. But this lack of comparative achievement is not due at all to innate inferiority of Southern white men to their brethren in higher latitudes. Mr. Thomas Nelson Page in his famous book on the Old South, accepts this derogatory fact and explains its cause with much ingenuity. The white people of the South claim, or rather boast of, a race prepotency and inheritance as great as that of any breed of men in the world. But they clearly fail to show like attainment.

It would evidently be unfair to conclude that the white race in Georgia is inherently inferior to the people of New England because it has failed to produce names of like renown. The difference in wealth, culture and bracing tone of environments are quite sufficient to account for the difference in results. I think

that you and Mr. Watson will be generous enough to concede to the Negro the benefit of the same argument which the defenders of the South resort to in justification of its own relative backwardness. The Negro has never, during the whole course of history, been surrounded by those influences which tend to strengthen and develop the mind. To expect the Negroes of Georgia to produce a great general like Napoleon when they are not even allowed to carry arms, or to deride them for not producing scholars like those of the Renaissance when a few years ago they were forbidden the use of letters, verges closely upon the outer rim of absurdity. Do you look for great Negro statesmen in States where black men are not allowed to vote? Mr. Watson can tell something about the difficulty of being a statesman in Georgia, against the protest of the ruling political ring. He tried it. Above all, for Southern white men to berate the Negro for failing to gain the highest rounds of distinction, reaches the climax of cruel inconsistency. One is reminded of the barbarous Teutons, in Titus Andronicus, who, after cutting out the tongue and hacking off the hands of the lovely Lavina, ghoulishly chided her for not calling for sweet water with which to wash her delicate hands.

Here is another specimen of the grade of reasoning to which the readers of *Tom Watson's Magazine* are treated:

"Let me repeat to you, Doctor, the unvarnished truth, for it may do you good. The advance made by your race in America is the reflection of the white man's civilization. Just that and nothing more. The Negro lives in the light of the white man's civilization and reflects a part of that light."

Here again we come across the thread bare argument of the advocates of suppression and subordination of the Negro. The aptitude of any people for progress is tested by the readiness with which they absorb and assimilate the environment of which they form a part. I wonder if Mr. Watson would contend that the red Indian shows capacity for civilization because he neither borrows nor imitates. Civilization is not a spontaneous generation with any race or nation known to history, but the torch is handed down from race to race and from age to age, and gains in brilliancy as it goes. The progress made by the Negro has been natural and inevitable. Does Mr. Watson expect the American Negro to invent an alphabet before he learns to read? The Negro has advanced in exactly the same fashion that the white race has advanced, by taking advantage of all that has gone before. Other men have labored and we have entered into their labors. The Japanese did not invent the battleship, modern artillery, or the modern manual of arms, but they used them pretty effectively. A young race, just like the individual, must first appropriate and

apply what has already gone before. The white man has no exclusive proprietorship in civilization. White man's civilization is as much a misnomer as the white man's multiplication table. It is the equal inheritance of any one who can appropriate and apply it. This is the only practicable test of a people's capacity. I have no doubt that Mr. Watson would say that the million white people of Georgia are a very capable folk. And yet how many of them have added anything to the processes of civilization? They have simply entered into, and carried on the processes already established. When Mr. Watson concedes the Negro's ability to do this much he negatives the whole argument of inferiority.

You and Mr. Watson, by common, unaccountable parallelism, make the same quotation from Buckle's History of Civilization, and in some mysterious manner endeavor to turn his words to the detriment of the Negro:

"The discoveries of great men never leave us; they are immortal, they contain those eternal truths which survive the shock of empires, outlive the struggle of rival creeds and witness the decay of successive religions. The discoveries of genius alone remain; it is to them we owe all that we now have; they are for all ages and all times; never young and never old, they bear the seeds of their own life, they flow on in perennial, undying stream: they are essentially cumulative, and giving birth to additions which they subsequently receive, they thus influence the most distant posterity, and after lapse of centuries produce more effect than they were able to do even at the moment of their promulgation." Genius has no age, no country, no race; it belongs to mankind—who cares whether Sir Isaac Newton or Watts or Fulton was red, or white, or brown? Shakespeare means no more to you than he does to me, except in so far as you may have greater capacity of appreciation and enjoyment. Bacon and Darwin appeal to the world. Do you think that when the candle of genius has been lighted by fire from above it can be hid under a bushel of racial exclusiveness? Nay; rather, it is set on a candle stick and gives light unto all who grope in darkness.

The Negro enters into the inheritance of all the ages on equal terms with the rest, and who can say that he will not contribute his quota of genius to enrich the blood of the world.

The line of argument of every writer who undertakes to belittle the Negro is a well beaten path. Liberia and Hayti are bound to come in for their share of ridicule and contemptuous handling. Mr. Watson calls these experiments freshly to mind, lest we forget, lest we forget. We are told all about the incapacity of the black race for self-government, the relapse into barbarism and much more of which we have heard before; and yet when

we take all the circumstances into account, Hayti presents to the world one of the most remarkable achievements in the annals of human history. The panegyric of Wendell Phillips on Toussaint L'Ouverture is more than an outburst of rhetorical fancy; it is a just measure of his achievements in terms of his humble environment and the limited instrumentalities at his command. Where else in the course of history has a slave, with the aid of slaves, expelled a powerfully entrenched master class, and set up a government patterned after civilized models and which without external assistance or reinforcement from a parent civilization, has endured for a hundred years in face of a frowning world? When we consider the difficulties that confront a weak government, without military or naval means to cope with its more powerful rivals, and where commercial adventurers are ever and anon stirring up internal strife, thus provoking the intervention of stronger governments, the marvel is that the republic of Hayti still endures, the only self-governing State of the Antilles. To expect as effective and proficient government to prevail in Hayti as at Washington would be expecting more of the black men in Hayti than we find in the white men of South America. And yet, I suspect that the million of Negroes in Hayti are as well governed as the corresponding number of blacks in Georgia where only yesterday, eight men were taken from the custody of the law and lynched without judge or jury. It is often charged that these people have not maintained the pace set by the old master class, that the plantations are in ruin and that the whole island wears the aspect of dilapidation. Wherever a lower people overrun the civilization of a higher, there is an inevitable lapse toward the level of the lower. When barbarians and semi-civilized hordes of northern Europe overran the southern peninsulas, the civilization of the world was wrapped in a thousand years of darkness. Relapse inevitably precedes the rebound. Is there anything in the history of Hayti contrary to the law of human development?

You ask: "Can you change the color of the Negro's skin, the kink of his hair, the bulge of his lip, or the beat of his heart, with a spelling book or a machine?" This rhetorical outburst does great credit to your literary skill, and is calculated to delight the simple; but analysis fails to reveal in it any pregnant meaning. Since civilization is not an attribute of the color of skin, or curl of hair or curve of lip, there is no necessity for changing such physical peculiarities, and if there was, the spelling book and the machine would be very unlikely instruments for its accomplishment. But why, may I ask, would you desire to change the Negro's heart throb, which already beats at a normal human

pace? You need not be so frantic about the superiority of your race. Whatever superiority it may possess, inherent or acquired, will take care of itself without such rabid support. Has it ever occurred to you that the people of New England blood, who have done and are doing most to make the white race great and glorious in this land, are the most reticent about extravagant claims to everlasting superiority? You protest too much. Your loud pretensions, backed up by such exclamatory outburst of passion, make upon the reflecting mind the impression that you entertain a sneaking suspicion of their validity.

Your position as to the work and worth of Booker T. Washington is pitifully anomalous. You recite the story of his upward struggle with uncontrolled admiration: "The story of this little ragged, barefooted pickaninny, who lifted his eyes from a cabin in the hills of Virginia, saw a vision and followed it, until at last he presides over the richest and most powerful institution in the South, and sits down with crowned heads and presidents, has no parallel even in the Tales of the Arabian Nights." You say that this story appeals to the universal heart of humanity. And yet in a recent letter to the *Columbia States*, you regard it as an unspeakable outrage that Mr. Robert C. Ogden should walk arm in arm with this wonderful man who "appeals to the heart of universal humanity," and introduce him to the lady clerks in a dry goods store. Your passionate devotion to a narrow dogma has seriously impaired your sense of humor. The subject of your next great novel has been announced as "The Fall of Tuskegee." In one breath you commend the work of this great institution, while in another you condemn it because it does not fit into your preconceived scheme in the solution of the race problem. The Tuskegee ideal: "to make Negroes producers, lovers of labor, independent, honest and good" is one which you say that only a fool or a knave can find fault with, because, in your own words, "it rests squarely upon the eternal verities." Over against this you add with all the condemnatory emphasis of italics and exclamation point: "*Tuskegee is not a servant training school!*" And further: "Mr. Washington is not training Negroes to take their places in the industries of the South in which white men direct and control them. He is not training students to be servants and come at the beck and call of any man. He is training them to be masters of men, to be independent, to own and operate their own industries, plant their own field, buy and sell their own goods." All of which you condemn by imperative inference ten times stronger than your faint and forced verbal approval. It is a heedless man who wilfully flaunts his little philosophy in face of "the eternal verities." When the wise man finds that his preju-



dices are running against fixed principles in God's cosmic plan, he speedily readjusts them in harmony therewith. Has it never occurred to you to reexamine the foundation of the faith, as well as the feeling, that is in you, since you admit that it runs afoul of the "eternal verities?"

Mr. Washington's motto, in his own words, is that "the Negro has been worked; but now he must learn to work." The man who works for himself is of more service to any community than the man whose labor is exploited by others. You bring forward the traditional bias of the slave regime to modern conditions, viz.: that the Negro did not exist in his own right and for his own sake, but for the benefit of the white man. This principle is as false in nature as it is in morals. The naturalists tell us that throughout all the range of animal creation, there is found no creature which exists for the sake of any other, but each is striving after its own best welfare. Do you fear that the Negro's welfare is incompatible with that of the white man? I commend to you a careful perusal of the words of Mr. E. Gardner Murphy who, like yourself, is a devoted Southerner, and is equally zealous to promote the highest interest of that section: "Have prosperity, peace and happiness ever been successfully or permanently based upon indolence, inefficiency, and hopelessness? Since time began, has any human thing that God has made taken damage to itself or brought damage to the world through knowledge, truth, hope, and honest toil?" Read these words of your fellow Southerner, Mr. Dixon, meditate upon them; they will do you good as the truth doeth the upright in heart.

You quote me as being in favor of the amalgamation of the races. A more careful reading of the article referred to would have convinced you that I was arguing against it as a probable solution of the race problem. I merely stated the intellectual conviction that two races cannot live indefinitely side by side, under the same general regime without ultimately fusing. This was merely the expression of a belief, and not the utterance of a preference nor the formulation of a policy. I know of no colored man who advocates amalgamation as a feasible policy of solution. You are mistaken. The Negro does not "hope and dream of amalgamation." This would be self-stultification with a vengeance. If such a policy were allowed to dominate the imagination of the race, its women would give themselves over to the unrestrained passion of white men, in quest of tawny offspring, which would give rise to a state of indescribable moral debauchery. At the same time you would hardly expect the Negro, in derogation of his common human qualities, to proclaim that he is so diverse from God's other human creatures as to make the blending of the races

contrary to the law of nature. The Negro refuses to become excited or share in your frenzy on this subject. The amalgamation of the races is an ultimate possibility, though not an immediate probability. But what have you and I to do with ultimate questions, anyway? Our concern is with duty, not destiny. There are statisticians who can tell you, to the tick of the clock, when the last ton of coal in the bowels of the earth will be consumed; but you will not lower the temperature of your sitting-room one degree next winter in view of that ultimate contingency. The exhaustion of solar heat is within the purview of astronomical calculation, and yet we eat and drink and make merry in supreme indifference to that far-off calamitous event. Do you not suppose that the future generations will have wisdom adequate to the problems of their day? We certainly have no surplus wisdom to advance them. Sufficient unto the day is the ignorance thereof. Your frantic dread of amalgamation reminds one of those religionists who would frighten a heedless world into the belief that the end is at hand. It is conceivable that you voluntarily unfrocked yourself as a priest of God, where your function was to save the individual soul from punishment in the next world, in order that you might the more effectively warn your race to flee from amalgamation, as from the wrath to come.

But do you know, Mr. Dixon, that you are probably the foremost promoter of amalgamation between the two oceans? Whenever you narrow the scope of the Negro by preaching the doctrine of hate, you drive thousands of persons of lighter hue over to the white race carrying more or less Negro blood in their train. The blending of the races is less likely to take place if the self-respect and manly opportunity of the Negro are respected and encouraged, than if he is to be forever crushed beneath the level of his faculties for dread of the fancied result. Hundreds of the composite progeny are daily crossing the color line and carrying as much of the despised blood as an albicant skin can conceal without betrayal. I believe that it was Congressman Tillman, brother of the more famous Senator of that name, who stated on the floor of the constitutional convention of South Carolina, that he knew of four hundred white families in that State who had a taint of Negro blood in their veins. I personally know, or know of, fifty cases of transition in the city of Washington. It is a momentous thing for one to change his caste. The man or woman who affects to deny, ignore or scorn the class with whom he previously associated is usually deemed deficient in the nobler qualities of human nature. It is not conceivable that persons of this class would undergo the self-degradation and humiliation of soul necessary to cross the great "social divide" unless it be to escape for them-

selves and their descendants an odious and despised status. Your oft expressed and passionately avowed belief that the progressive development of the Negro would hasten amalgamation is not borne out by the facts of observation. The refined and cultivated class among colored people are as much disinclined to such unions as the whites themselves. I am sorry that you saw fit to characterize Frederick Douglass, as "a bombastic vituperator." You thereby gave poignant offense to ten millions of his race who regard him as the best embodiment of their possibilities. Besides millions of your race rate him among the foremost and best beloved of Americans. How would you feel if some one should stigmatize Jefferson Davis or Robert E. Lee in such language, these beau ideals of your Southern heart? But I will not undertake to defend Frederick Douglass against your calumniations. I am frank to confess that I do not feel that he needs it. The point I have in mind to make about Mr. Douglass is that he has a hold upon the affection of his race, not on account of his second marriage, but in spite of it. He seriously affected his standing with his people by that marriage.

Degradation would soonest lead to race blending through illicitness. Had the institution of slavery existed for another century without fresh African importation, there would scarcely have remained an unbleached Negro on the continent. The best possible evidence that the development of self-respect does not lead to amalgamation is furnished by Oberlin College in Ohio, and by Berea College in Kentucky. These institutions have had thousands of students of the two races, male and female associating on terms of personal equality, mutual respect and good will, and yet in all these years, not a single case of miscegenation has resulted. Contrast this record with the concubinage of the Southern plantation and the illicit relations of the city slum, and it is easy to see where the chief stress should be placed by those who so frantically dread race admixture.

It seems to me, Mr. Dixon, that this frantic abhorrence of amalgamation is a little late in its appearance. Whence comes this stream of white blood which flows with more or less spissitude, in the veins of some six out of ten million Negroes? Is it due to the bleaching breath of Saxon civilization? The Afro-American is hardly a Negro at all, except constructively; but a new creature. Who brought about this present approachment between the races? Do you not appreciate the inconsistency in the attitude and the action on the part of many of the loud-mouthed advocates of race purity? It is said that old Father Chronos devoured his offspring in order to forestall future complications. But we do not learn that he put a bridle upon his passion as the

surest means of security. The most effective service you can render to check the evil of amalgamation is to do missionary work among the males of your own race. This strenuous advocacy of race purity in face of proved proneness for miscegenation affords a striking reminder of the lines of Hudibras: —

“The self-same thing they will abhor,  
One way, and long another for.”

I beg now to call your attention to one or two statements of fact. You state that “only one-third of the cotton crop is to-day raised by Negro labor.” I would like to ask what is your authority for that statement? According to the twelfth census, the latest available data on the subject, out of a total cotton crop of 9,534,707 bales for 1899, Negro proprietors alone produced 3,707,881 bales, or 39 per cent. of the total crop. There were 746,715 such proprietors against 1,418,343 Negro agricultural laborers. If we suppose that these hired laborers were as efficient as the more independent tenants, it will be seen that, instead of raising only one-third, the Negro’s immediate labor produced practically all of the cotton crop of the South.

Again, you say that “we have spent about \$800,000,000 on Negro education since the war.” This statement is so very wide of the mark, that I was disposed to regard it as a misprint, if you had not reinforced it with an application implying a like amount. In the report of the Bureau of Education for 1901, the estimated expenditure for Negro education in all the former slave States since the Civil War was put down at \$121,184,568. The amount contributed by Northern philanthropy during that interval is variously estimated from fifty to seventy-five millions. Your estimate is four times too large. It would be interesting and informing to the world if you would reveal the source of your information. These misstatements of fact are not of so much importance in themselves, as that they serve to warn the reader against the accuracy and value of your general judgments. It would seem that you derive your figures of arithmetic from the same source from which you fashion your figures of speech. You will not blame the reader for not paying much heed to your sweeping generalizations, when you are at such little pains as to the accuracy of easily ascertainable data.

Your proposed solution of the race problem by colonizing the Negroes in Liberia reaches the climax of absurdity. It is difficult to see how such a proposition could emanate from a man of your reputation. Did you consult Cram’s Atlas about Liberia? Please do so. You will find that it has an area of 48,000 square miles, and a population of 1,500,000, natives and immigrants. The area

and population are about the same as those of North Carolina, which, I believe, is your native State. When you tell us that this restricted area, without commerce, without manufacture, without any system of organized industry, can support every Negro in America, in addition to its present population, I beg mildly to suggest that you recall your plan for revision before submitting it to the judgment of a critical world. Your absolute indifference to and heedlessness of the facts, circumstances and conditions involved in the scheme of colonization well befit the absurdity of the general proposition.

The solution of the race problem in America is indeed a grave and serious matter. It is one that calls for statesmanlike breadth of view, philanthropic tolerance of spirit, and exact social knowledge. The whole spirit of your propaganda is to add to its intensity and aggravation. You stir the slumbering fires of race wrath into an uncontrollable flame. I have read somewhere that Max Nordau on reading the Leopard's Spots, wrote to you suggesting the awful responsibility you had assumed, in stirring up enmity between race and race. Your teachings subvert the foundations of law and established order. You are the high priest of lawlessness, the prophet of anarchy. Rudyard Kipling places this sentiment in the mouth of the wreckless stealer of seals in the Northern Sea: "There's never a law of God nor man runs north of fifty-three." This description exactly fits the brand of literature with which you are flooding the public. You openly urge your fellow citizens to override all law, human and divine. Are you aware of the force and effect of these words? "Could fatuity reach a sublimer height than the idea that the white man will stand idly by and see the performance? What will he do when put to the test? He will do exactly what his white neighbor in the North does when the Negro threatens his bread—kill him!" These words breath out hatred and slaughter and suggest the murder of innocent men whose only crime is quest for the God-given right to work. You poison the mind and pollute the imagination through the subtle influence of letters. Are you aware of the force and effect of evil suggestion when the passions of men are in a state of unstable equilibrium? A heterogeneous population, where the elements are, on any account, easily distinguishable, is an easy prey for the promoter of wrath. The fuse is already prepared for the spark. The soul of the mob is stirred by suggestion of hatred and slaughter, as a famished beast at the smell of blood. Hatred is the ever handy dynamic of the demagog. The rabble responds so much more readily to an appeal to passion than to reason. To wantonly stir up the fires of race antipathy is as execrable a deed as flaunting a red rag in the face

of a bull at a summer's picnic, or raising a false cry of "fire" in a crowded house. Human society could not exist one hour except on the basis of law which holds the baser passions of men in restraint.

In our complex situation it is only the rigid observance of law re-enforced by higher moral restraint that can keep these passions in bound. You speak about giving the Negro a "square deal." Even among gamblers, a "square deal" means to play according to the rules of the game. The rules which all civilized States have set for themselves are found in the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, the Sermon on the Mount, and the organic law of the land. You acknowledge no such restraints when the Negro is involved, but waive them all aside with frenzied defiance. You preside at every cross road lynching of a helpless victim; wherever the midnight murderer rides with rope and torch, in quest of the blood of his black brother, you ride by his side; wherever the cries of the crucified victim go up to God from the crackling flame, behold you are there; when women and children, drunk with ghoulish glee, dance around the funeral pyre and mock the death groans of their fellow man and fight for ghastly souvenirs, you have your part in the inspiration of it all. When guilefully guided workmen in mine and shop and factory, goaded by a real or imaginary sense of wrong, begin the plunder and pillage of property and murder of rival men, your suggestion is justifier of the dastardly doings. Lawlessness is gnawing at the very vitals of our institutions. It is the supreme duty of every enlightened mind to allay rather than spur on this spirit. You are hastening the time when there is to be a positive and emphatic show of hands—not of white hands against black hands, God forbid; not of Northern hands against Southern hands, heaven forfend; but a determined show of those who believe in law and God and constituted order, against those who would undermine and destroy the organic basis of society, involving all in a common ruin. No wonder Max Nordau exclaimed: "God, man, are you aware of your responsibility!"

But do not think, Mr. Dixon, that when you evoke the evil spirit, you can exorcise him at will. The Negro in the end will be the least of his victims. Those who become inoculated with the virus of race hatred are more unfortunate than the victims of it. Voltaire tells us that it is more difficult and more meritorious to wean men of their prejudices than it is to civilize the barbarian. Race hatred is the most malignant poison that can afflict the mind. It freezes up the fount of inspiration and chills the higher faculties of the soul. You are a greater enemy to your own race than you are to mine.

Permit me to close this letter with a citation from Goldsmith's *Elegy on a Mad Dog*. Please note the reference is descriptive and prophetic of the fate of the wreakers of wrath and the victims of it.

“This man and dog at first were friends,  
 But when a pique began,  
 The dog to gain some private ends,  
 Went mad and bit the man.

“Around from all the neighboring streets,  
 The wondering neighbors ran,  
 And swore the dog had lost his wits,  
 To bite so good a man.

“The wound it seemed both sore and sad  
 To every Christian eye,  
 And while they swore the dog was mad,  
 They swore the man would die.

“But soon a wonder came to light,  
 That show'd the rogues they lied,  
 The man recovered of the bite;  
 The dog it was that died.”

I have written you thus fully in order that you may clearly understand how the case lies in the Negro's mind. If any show of feeling or bitterness of spirit crops out in the treatment or between the lines, it is wholly without vindictive intent; but is the inevitable outcome of dealing with issues that verge upon the deepest human passion.

Yours truly,  
 KELLY MILLER.











